

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 EB-07 /081 W

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R 240415Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5012

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 554

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS PDIP PFOR EAID TN US

SUBJ: SOVIET -TONGAN RELATIONS

REF: SUVA 542 NOTAL

1. EA/ANP OFFICER HAROLD NELSON VISITED TONGA BRIEFLY MAY 22 TO ATTEMPT TO CLARIFY REPORTS OF SOVIET AID OFFERS AND POSSIBLE ACCESS TO TONGAN HARBORS FOR SOVIET FISHING VESSELS. TONGAN SOURCES CONSULTED, PRINCIPALLY ASST SECTY UASI OF FOREIGN MINISTRY, WERE NON COMMITTAL AND CLAIMED NO FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF REPORTED OFFER OF AID. UASI SPECULATED THAT MUCH OF PRESS REPORTING OF SOVIET AMBASSADORS CONVERSATION WITH KING WAS ONLY RUMOR, SUGGESTION SUPPORTED BY KING STATEMENT THAT HE HAD QTE DOZED OFF UNQTE DURING PART OF AMBASSADORS SPEECH (REFTEL).

2. MAJOR G.R. HORN BROOK, NEW ZEALAND OFFICER WHO COMMANDS TONGA DEFENSE FOR CE, WAS SUSPICIOUS OF REPORTS THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR
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PROMISED MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO TONGAS AIRPORT. WHILE HORN BROOK

AGREED INTERNATIONAL STANDARD AIRPORT COULD BE USEFUL TO SOVIETS FOR EXCHANGE OF FISHING BOAT CREWS, HE RECALLED DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN LAST AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT WHEN NOBLE LAND OWNERS HELD UP CONSTRUCTION FOR TWO YEARS WHILE CLAIMS FOR DESTRUCTION OF COCONUT PLANTATIONS WERE PROCESSED. HORN BROOK FELT ANY MOVEMENT ON MAJOR AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD BE VERY SLOW DUE TO NECESSITY OF COMPENSATION FOR LAND OWNERS WHO ARE PRIMARILY NOBLES WITH STRONG INFLUENCE IN TONGAN SOCIETY.

3. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AGREED WITH HORN BROOKS ASSESSMENT OF AIRPORT PROJECT, ADDING HE SAW ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH TONGA AS SOVIET REACTION TO PRC RPT PRC PRESENCE IN FIJI AND NOT ATTEMPT BY TONGANS TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL AID, EITHER FROM USSR OR AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND US AS REACTION TO REPORTED SOVIET OFFER. HE DID NOT SENSE ANY WILLINGNESS ON PART OF TONGANS TO COMPLETE AGREEMENT ON FISHING RIGHTS AND SHORE FACILITIES WITH USSR.

4. ROC CHARGE KAO IS CONVINCED USSR/PRC RIVALRY HAS NOW SPREAD TO SOUTH PACIFIC. KAO BELIEVES AIRPORT PROJECT REPORTEDLY OFFERED BY SOVIETS IS ATTEMPT TO (#) AND INFLUENCE IN RESPONSE TO PRC INITIATIVES IN FIJI AND POSSIBLY WESTERN SAMOA. SURPRISINGLY KAO PRODUCED REPORT BY ROC CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION TEAM WHICH VISITED TONGA IN JANUARY 1976 AND INDICATED ROC MIGHT POSSIBLY BE INTERESTED IN AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, ALTHOUGH NOT ON AS LARGE A SCALE AS RUMORED SOVIET OFFER.

5. NELSON GAINED IMPRESSION RUMORS OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN KING AND SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAD FAR EXCEEDED SUBSTANCE OF TALKS AND KING (AND OTHER TONGANS) ARE RELUCTANT TO MAKE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS DUE TO REACTION TO INITIAL REPORTS. IN ANY EVENT, SITUATION IS STILL CONFUSED BOTH AS REGARDS SOVIET INTEREST IN TONGA AND TONGAN INTEREST IN ACCEPTING SOVIET PRESENCE. PLANNED VISIT BY SOVIET COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR MAKAROV MAY CLARIFY SITUATION TO SOME EXTENT.

HALL

NOTE: (#) PARA 4-AS RECEIVED.

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